



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MOZAMBIQUE

FIRST PERSON

Helping Bright Girls Return to School

An orphaned girl gets a second chance at education



Sinaida Carlos Jeremias at Marrumwano Primary School, Inhambane Province.

"I stopped worrying about where to get money to buy basic things to survive, like clothing, school supplies, and food," said Sinaida Carlos Jeremias, a recipient of the USAID Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Sinaida Carlos Jeremias stopped going to school last year after her parents died. She left her home in Maputo, Mozambique, to live with her grandparents in a village near Inhambane, but they could not afford to pay for the school fees, books, and uniform she would need to keep studying.

In April 2005, staff and volunteers from Kulima, a local community organization, came across Jeremias while walking house to house to identify girls needing help to attend the local school. They were looking for girls who might qualify for USAID's Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program. In Jeremias they found a perfect fit for the scholarship — a girl who, without outside support, would have a very slim chance of completing her education. A few weeks later, Jeremias received a scholarship to pay for school fees, a uniform, and school supplies. She enrolled in the fifth grade.

"This program is a huge motivator for the girls. The emotional support offered to them is a pivotal factor. Oftentimes, in these rural communities, people do not think that a girl can succeed at school," explained Francisco Batista, the director of Jeremias's school.

"Even seeing Kulima's female staff can be an inspiration for girls," he added, because it showed them a path they could follow if they completed their studies.

Jeremias is one of 38 scholarship recipients at her school. As part of the scholarship, girls are paired with mentors who help them address the various problems they face, encourage them to stay in school, and counsel them on preventing HIV/AIDS. Jeremias enjoys going to school and walking four kilometers each way to get there. She hopes to become an engineer to help support her younger brothers and sisters.

In Mozambique 6,000 girls are receiving educational assistance this year through the scholarship program. USAID finds girls with academic potential who are orphaned, disabled, affected by AIDS, or economically disadvantaged, and gives them the means to complete their education and find the path to a successful future.

Photo: Winrock International/Jaimie Bleck